

The Law of Loot Rules in Los Angeles

Local Ad Club Asleep to Vigilance Work
While Schlock Shops and Medical Fakes
Prey on Public

Journalism Here on Lower Level Than in Atlanta—
Clean Advertisers Being Driven to Billboards—
Eastern Tourist Regarded as Fair Game—
Adams Thinks Prospect of Early
Clean-up Not Encouraging

By SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS

Los Angeles, Cal., May 29.—To the expert stranger within its gates this city advertises frank warning. "Caveat emptor" is the voice of its welcome, shouting from a thousand signs and echoed in the columns of every local newspaper. "Los Angeles Advertises Itself," is one of the local "booster" slogans. It does. It advertises itself in such unmistakable terms that he who runs may read, and he who reads will run if wisdom be in him. He who stays to read further in that printed welter of exaggeration, flamboyance and verbal bunco which constitutes the bulk of local advertising (an escaped visitor once characterized it as "the Ananias concerto for bass drums") should step warily, buy charily and disbelieve what he sees if he would come out purse-whole. Honor, uprightness and fair dealing exist in mercantile circles here, of course. But their voices are almost lost in the stentorian chorus of fakes.

My first three hours here showed me what Los Angeles is, from an advertising point of view. The succeeding days of investigation were mainly confirmatory. Half of my preliminary afternoon was spent among the stores, the other half in reading the day's newspapers. Thus the picture was fully outlined if not wholly filled in. To give a New Yorker an adequate notion of what the shopping district of this city resembles is difficult. But if one can imagine the auction area of Fourteenth Street and the "schlock" section of Fifth Avenue multiplied by ten and then scattered with a prodigal hand over the mercantile centre of a big city a fair idea of the lay-out may be gained. Finkelstein-Willard couldn't make a living in Los Angeles. He never could have got even a start against the local brand of competition. Here, cheek by jowl with the standard department stores and the high class specialty shops, flourish undisturbed, in the teeth of the law, every kind of fake, sham and commercial trickery known to the underworld of trade. Ninety-odd minutes of casual exploration (subsequently checked up by more detailed investigation) on the best shopping streets of the city furnished the following roster:

Three fake jewelry auctions.
One bunco book auction.
Three "closing out at 50 cents on the dollar" cloak and suit sales, one of which had been constantly closing out for two years.
A "Confidence Sale" (with two superfluous syllables in "confidence") offering \$20 chairs for \$7.00, \$58.00 tables at \$30.00, and other furniture to match.
A Japanese art sale at "less than wholesale prices."
A "Sample Shop" (clothing) specializing in prehistoric styles, with magnificent claims of value.
Three "schlock" men's furnishing stores suitably window-baited.

A "removal sale" of pianos offering "wonderful bargains" in musical junk revarnished and fake-stencilled.
Our old friend the "genuine" Panama hat, worth, in this instance, "\$6.00 of anybody's money," and made (naturally!) of Japanese paper, dear at \$3.50.

Auction sale of a "Magnificent Art Collection from the well-known Orient," consisting mainly in objets de bureau from the well-known Oriental source known in New York as "East of the Bowery."

Another old friend, the "upstairs tailor," with a few choice catchwords about his downstairs competitor, whom he calls a "Ground Floor Pirate," in the hope of making his public believe that he is selling \$25 suits for \$15, which he isn't.

Still a third familiar spirit from out the past, the sample shoe store, "in all sizes" and at prices "less than half their real value."
Forty-odd window displays of "value" claims that would send Gimbel Bros. shrieking to the arithmetic for more and higher figures.

A sale of marked-down raincoats of the sieve-and-sponge variety, trading on the name of a concern of national reputation.

A big fire sale of relics from the Ark purporting, mendaciously, to be the stock from the recent fire which gutted the Woolworth 5, 10 and 15 cent stores.

Five haberdasheries selling (with slight variations but all on the same principle) regular 25 cent neckties marked up to 39 cents, regular \$1.00 shirts marked up to \$1.25, and regular \$3.00 silk shirts marked up to \$3.95. This is a slight reverse English on the statements upon the window cards, but it embodies the actual facts.

One sale of guaranteed imported kimonos, from lower Washington Street, New York City. (The Tribune Bureau of Investigations has some exact duplicates in its museum of fakes.)

An "anniversary sale" in which the store entertains the public by some of the most imaginative fairy tales of values that I have ever seen in print.

And here and there and everywhere, it seemed, giving, as it were, the keynote to the general advertising chorus, the scarlet-and-white streamers of the "painless" dentists, whose stentorian claims all but drowned out the agonized yells of the patients behind them.

It might not seem possible, but the newspapers are worse than the store advertisements. For at least the stores do not imperil anybody's health. But the papers are a public menace. If there is any form of filth or fraud which is too nasty or vicious for the standards of Los Angeles journalism I should be glad to learn of it and give such credit as is due. But I scarcely hope to hear. When newspapers accept such deadly matter as knifeless cancer cures, consumption cures and drugless healing for all diseases, and such filth as gonorrhea quackery and sexual restoratives, there is no lower depth for them to descend into. Beside this their financial traps and their occult and fortune-telling lures seem almost innocent. I had not expected to find on this transcontinental survey any other local press as degraded as that of Atlanta. Los Angeles journalism is on as low a level; in fact, it's a little lower. Not that the newspapers are worse here, but there are more of them.

Having viewed the stores and scanned the newspapers, I

could guess at what I should find as regards the local advertising organization. So I went to the headquarters of the Advertising Club of Los Angeles to find it. But I didn't find it. I didn't find anything but a locked door, either on this visit or on my two subsequent visits. It didn't matter. The real object of my call was to find out what the Vigilance Committee was doing besides sleeping. As a matter of fact, I was wrong again. The Vigilance Committee was not sleeping, but dead. It had died painlessly some years ago and, like an insubstantial pageant faded, left not a wrack behind.

From there I went to call upon a professional advertising man of prominence who, I thought, would surely be a member of the local advertising club. He is. He pays twelve dollars a year and goes to meetings about twice annually. That, as he remarked, lets him out. I tactfully endeavored to ascertain what was the matter with him.

"Nothing the matter with me," was his assurance. "It's with the club."

"Well, what's the matter with the club?"

"Are you going to quote me?" he countered.

"Why?"

"I owe my life to my country," he explained, patriotically.

"Therefore, keep my name confidential. What do you want to know, specially?"

"What the particular interest and work of the Advertising Club of Los Angeles is."

"It has several. It's a rooters' club and a political back-scratching outfit and a real estate circle and a few other things. It runs a cabaret show and a luncheon. The lunch is burn. It boosts. It boasts. It collects a lot of dues from fellows who wonder why the devil they pay 'em. I do."

"Has it a Vigilance Committee?"

"Requiescat in pace," said my informant, piously.

"What did it die of?"

"Inanition. Lack of anything to work on. It cleared this town up," said that extraordinary advertising man, looking me in the eye and without a quiver of the lips, "until it was as clean and pure of all offence as you see it to-day. Have you seen it to-day?"

"A little."

"The newspapers?"

"Yes."

"The stores?"

"Some."

"Well, don't say what you're thinking about me. I hate to be called a liar. What else?"

"Do you think the president of the club would, perhaps, give a more favorable view of its activities?"

"He might. He's not an advertising man."

Here was the replica of the astonishing situation that I had found in Atlanta.

"He's a good fellow," continued my informant, "and is highly thought of as an Ad Club president by his companions in the real estate business. So was his predecessor."

"Was he an advertising man?"

"No; he was a real estate, too."

"Do you always choose real estate men for presidents of your Ad Club?"

"Not at all," said my informant, resentfully. "The next president back in the line was an electrician."

"Haven't you ever elected a genuine advertising man to the office?"

"Indeed, we have. And he was the best president we ever had." He paused. "Until they indicted him," he concluded, regretfully.

"What did they indict him for?"

"Fake advertising."

Technically, I found, this was incorrect. The gentleman in question was indicted for fraudulent use of the mails in connection with a fake investment company, of which he was advertising manager. He was eventually acquitted, though three of the principals got jail sentences. He is now being talked of as the next president of the Advertising Club, and, as he is no longer connected in any way with the advertising business, I suppose he is fully eligible.

Early in its career the Advertising Club did accomplish some real, though not lasting, corrective work. It cleaned up one of the worst of the many fly-by-night real estate schemes which infested the locality in the days of the boom. It drove a few schlock stores out of business, prevailed upon some of the department stores to curb their exuberance, secured the passage of an honest advertising ordinance—and then cheerfully assumed that the ordinance would enforce itself. On this assumption the Vigilance Committee ceased to exist. I am told that it retired from action so as to leave the field to another and (supposedly) better fitted organization, the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association of Los Angeles. Further, I am assured that this association has, in the past, done wonders in cleaning up local advertising and merchandising methods. It may have done so, in the past. But mine is not a work of historical research; I am concerned with present conditions. Judged on this basis, the vigilance work of the "M. & M." must be conducted by one-eyed optimists under the leadership of a blind man. There isn't a block in the retail centre of Los Angeles that wouldn't furnish any alert advertising organization, such as, for instance, The Tribune Bureau of Investigations, with the material for a month's hard digging. But vigilance workers in the advertising field would not be obliged even to go forth into the streets searching for material; it would come to them every day, delivered in newspaper form in their own homes.

There are six newspapers in Los Angeles, of which the most important is The Times, owned and personally conducted by Harrison Gray Otis. General Otis is a severe and powerful critic of manners and morals—other people's—editorially. When it

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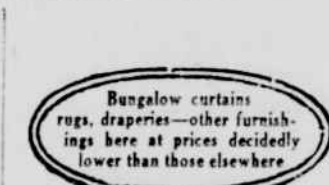
The Case of Gimbel Brothers

The Sunday Tribune for May 27th contained an interesting summary of The Tribune's answer to Gimbel Brothers' libel suit for \$1,000,000.

Not only did The Tribune's answer "justify" its action in printing Samuel Hopkins Adams' famous "Ice-land Fox" story on the basis of truth, but it also alleged certain business methods of the House of Gimbel that have received little publicity in the past.

While a limited supply of the May 27th issue of The Sunday Tribune lasts, a copy will be sent to any Tribune reader upon receipt of eight cents in stamps. Address Circulation Department, The Tribune, 154 Nassau St., New York.

The Tribune



HEARN

Fourteenth Street

West of Fifth Avenue

Sales Coming:
TOWELINGS
COMFORTABLES
TUB SKIRTS

With Tremendous Days—Our Annual June Sale Continues

These Days Place OUR VALUES FIRST

A Record Worthy of Our SUCCESSFUL CASH POLICY

For Example—The Following for Both Monday and Tuesday:

JUNE SALE OF

MUSLIN UNDERWEAR

"NOTHING SUCCEEDS LIKE SUCCESS"

Watch it grow in volume as the days go by—representative styles at low price—dependable qualities—and an array of the best values in town—fresh stocks for to-morrow and Tuesday.

EXTRA SIZES ARE INCLUDED.

Crepe de Chine and Satin—Also Trousseau Underwear at Sale Prices

ENVELOPE CHEMISES

EXTRA SIZES

Yokes with lace or emb'd and inserts, ribbon—

.38

Fancy yokes of lace or emb'd—

.57

Batiste and nainsook—white and flesh—cluster tucks, shirtings and picot edge or dainty laces and embroideries—

.74

Lingerie fabrics—daintiest models imaginable in interest—

1.24

Nainsook—embroidery or lace inserts and ribbon—

.19

Nainsook—variously trimmed with embroideries and fancy laces and ribbons—

.36

Nainsook—styles suitable for wear under sheer lingerie and Georgette blouses—

.74

CORSET COVERS

Corset Covers—high neck—tight fitting—sides 82 bust—

.24

Corset Covers—round or V-neck—embroidery and insert or embroidery ruffles—

.40

Night Dresses—round or V-neck—embroidery and insert or embroidery ruffles—

.78

Night Dresses—nainsook—new models—lace, embroidery and ribbon—

.18

Night Dresses—fine nainsook—deep V back and front, with yoke entirely of organza inserts and lace; round neck, with same effective trim—

.12

Petticoats—cambric and nainsook—ruffles with wide embroidery and insert or lace edge and inserts—

.19

Petticoats—nainsook—rows of lace or wide embroidery—

.12

Petticoats—cambric—ruffles of embroidery and tucks or lace and inserts—

.33

Combinations—embroidery edge, ribbon run—

.18

Short Underskirts—tucks and lace edge—

.58

Short Underskirts—ruffles with hemstitch hem—

.37

Short Underskirts—embroidery ruffles and tucks or lace and inserts—

.58

Crepe de Chine—Satin

Crepe de Chine Camisoles—yokes of fancy lace, ribbon—

.39

Crepe de Chine Camisoles—yokes of Val lace, zigzag shirings of satin ribbon—

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Crepe de Chine Camisoles—yokes of Val lace, zigzag shirings of satin ribbon—

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